

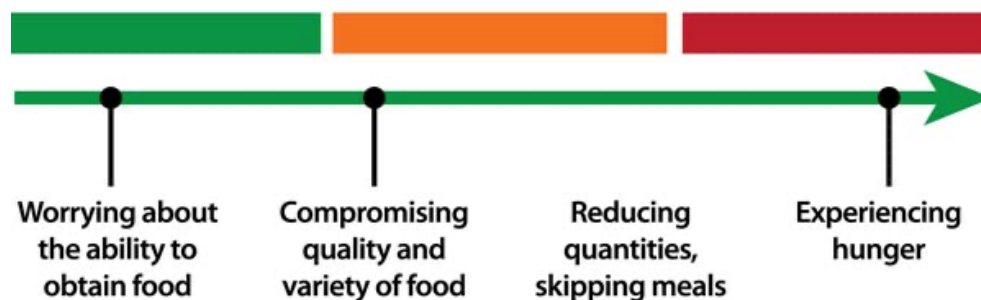
Proposal: No Hungry College Students Initiative

Created and prepared by Meghann Greenhill

Preface

By now everyone is aware that the price to attend college continues to rise and empty the pockets of young college students. College students are struggling. Struggling between the choice of focusing on their education and social life or to get a part-time job so they can financially make it another week. Most students choose the latter, and yet they are still struggling. Many students face food insecurity, meaning they don't have the resources needed to eat enough (Rowan). Students are often forced to choose between paying for books, gas, or other necessities over buying food. Food takes a backseat for many college students, and they often believe they can get by without food (Hatch).

What is Food Insecurity?



LEADMN | College Students Connecting for Change

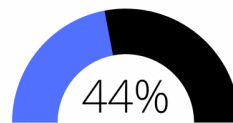
Food insecurity has been an ongoing issue that needs proper attention. For the last decade, college students have been surviving on an unhealthy, low budget diet of instant noodles and food rationing. Food insecurity is defined by the nonprofit organization Feeding America as

“a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.” This organization also notes the difference between hunger and food insecurity. These are not interchangeable words and mean entirely different things. Hunger is a physical result of not eating, and food insecurity is not having the financial resources to obtain food (Selcho).

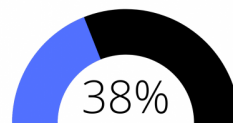
A survey conducted in fall 2019 of 167,000 students found that 39% of students at two or four-year colleges faced food insecurity in the last 30 days (Rowan). The pandemic made this problem worse. In fall 2020, a study revealed that students who contracted Covid-19 were 1.7 times more likely to experience food insecurity (Rowan). College students were out of work due to the virus and/or losing their jobs caused by shutdowns and layoffs—resulting in a rise of food insecure students. These numbers are consistent across the board. In another fall of 2020 study of 1,000 undergraduates, 52% sometimes relied on off-campus food banks, 30% of them used them at least monthly or more. Thirty-five percent of college students said hunger had a negative effect on their study skills. That survey also found that over one-third of students knew someone who dropped out of college because they couldn't afford food (Rowan).

Food Insecurity Among College Students in 2021

Data from [The Hope Center](#)



Students at two-year
schools affected by food
insecurity



Students at four-year
schools affected by food
insecurity

**Research
shows that
the
pandemic
made some
students
experience
more food
insecurity**

**3 in 5 students experienced
basic needs insecurity**

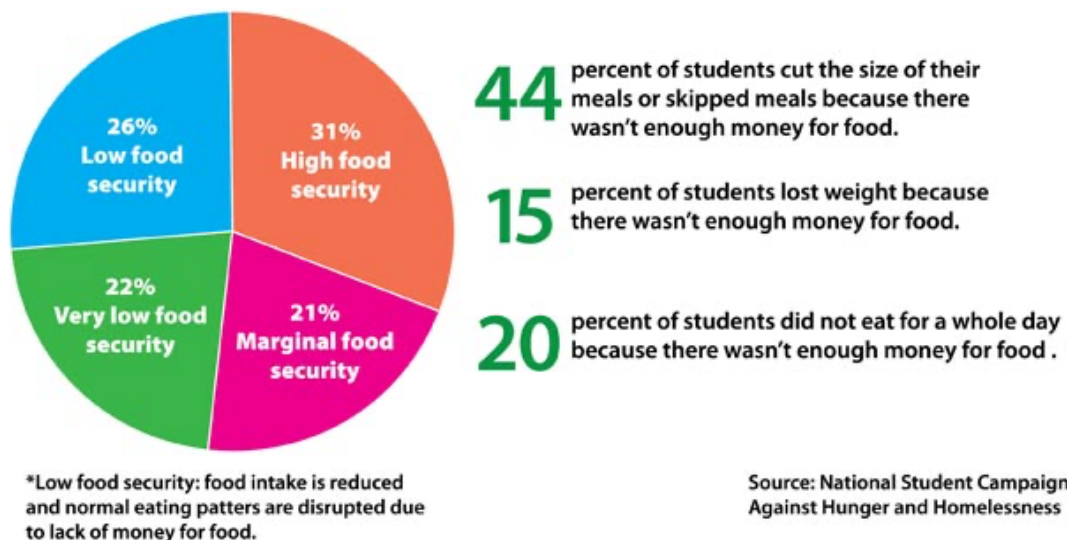


15%

**of students
experiencing
basic needs
insecurity
applied for
SNAP
benefits**

There is a stigma when it comes to asking for help, and there's no exception when it comes to food insecurity. Students often don't seek out help because they are embarrassed. The Hope Center also found that 52% of students who experience food insecurity in 2020 never received help because they didn't know how to ask for it (Rowan). Students who are food insecure statistically receive lower grades and withdraw before completing their degree. The consequences of this issue have a domino effect (Rowan).

Hunger on College Campuses



In 2020, only the third round of stimulus checks included adult dependents (Rowan). Not only that, but college students almost never qualify for government assistance (Selcho). We cannot rely on government funding and state lawmakers to make sure our students are food secure. This issue in higher education can be tackled from the inside of each individual institution by administration, and executed by college faculty such as counselors, advisors, and professors.

Proposal

Universities can help students in several ways. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and The American Academy of Pediatrics created screening tools that track people who are food insecure and direct them to resources. (Selcho). Many universities already have food pantries and conduct campus wide food drives to collect food donations.

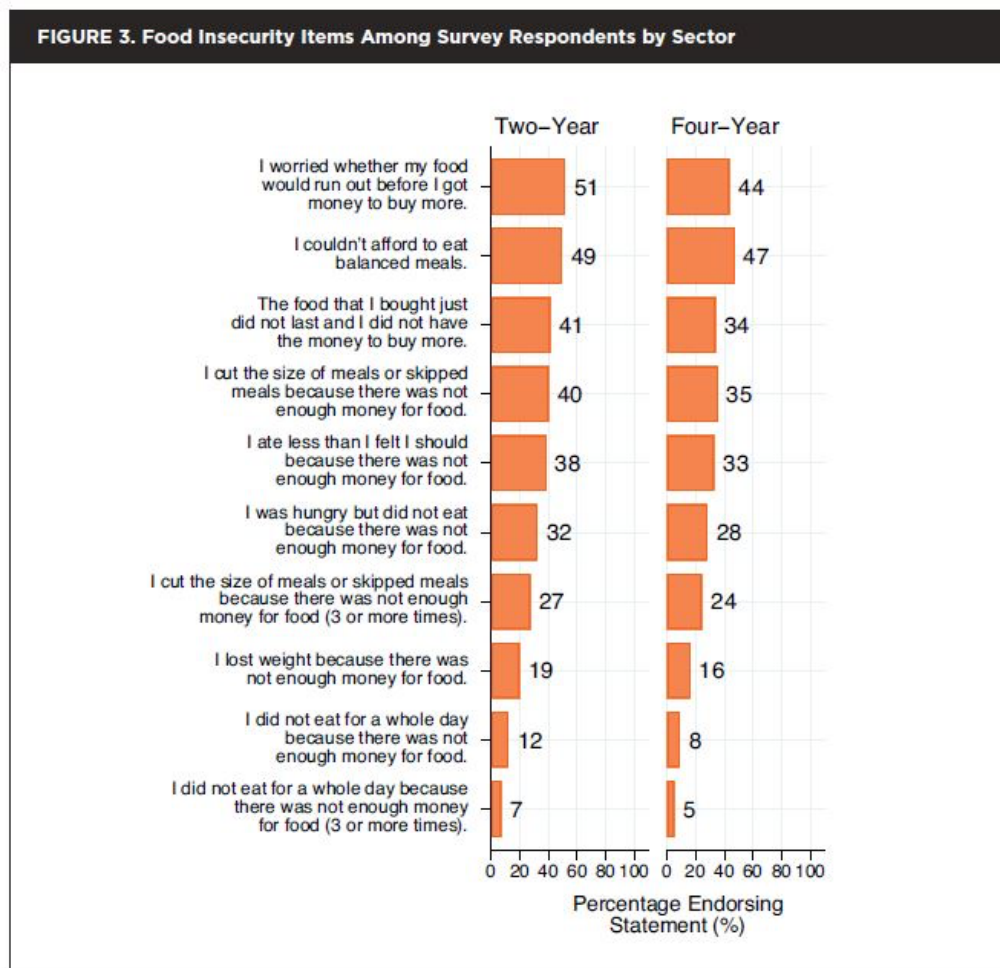
I am proposing that your institution adopts this protocol for surveying incoming and continuing students each semester. This would entail asking students a series of questions and based off their answers, directing them to the proper resources. This survey would be mandatory, and individuals would have the option of remaining anonymous if they wish. Students who remain anonymous will still receive support and resources following the survey, while allowing the institution to stay aware of how many students currently struggle. Students who submit their name on said survey will receive outreach support from counselors. Prior to completing the survey, based off their responses, students will be gently encouraged to seek help, let them know they aren't alone, educate them on how they can get help, and learn the benefits of seeking help, aside from not being hungry- better mental health, stronger grades, higher chance of graduation, while pointing them in the direction of resources and programs.

Proposed survey questions:

- How often have you been very hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food? (no days/some days/most days)
- How often have you found yourself eating less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food? (no days/some days/most days)

- How often have you worried whether food would run out before you could buy more?
(no days/some days/most days)

The above prompts are based off suggestions from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Source: 2018 #RealCollege Survey

Notes: For more details on the food security module used in this report, see Appendix C.

Along with these semester surveys, bringing awareness to food insecurity on campus is paramount. Professors will be expected to speak on the issue on the first day of class and offer further assistance at the students' request. Students need support and their professors are a direct line of support. Faculty will oversee the organization of food drives and advertising the access of

food pantries. Advertising the resources offered is an important aspect of this proposal because students often need several nudges and suggestions before they decide to act on a personal need. Advertisements will consist of brochures and posters spread out amongst campus facilities that students visit often, including cafeterias, libraries, study halls, dormitories, coffee shops, gyms, and student service waiting rooms. These advertisements will educate students on the access to on and off-campus food pantries, upcoming food drives and food security awareness events, access to college dietitians and government assistance they can apply for such as SNAP.

Food pantries have been shown to be beneficial to the University of California. According to a new study, the UC added a food pantry to each of its 10 campuses, and students who take advantage of this added resource are seeing improvements. These students experienced a reduced number of depressive symptoms, better overall physical health, and increased amounts of sleep (Hatch).

Four Colorado institutions—Colorado State University, Colorado State University Pueblo, Fort Lewis College, and Metropolitan State University of Denver have earned Hunger Free for their work to end hunger. These colleges provide food pantries, SNAP enrollment assistance, hold food security awareness events, and survey students on food insecurity (Colorado Department of Higher Education).

Benefits

To students: Becoming food secure has a domino effect on the wellbeing of the students. Aside from no longer struggling to eat enough, students will see an improvement in grades, mental health, and overall well-being.

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College administration: The higher education institution that adopts this proposal will see a spike in student retention and graduation rates. Institutional statistics will rise, and the efforts will result in a desirable college to attend and work at.

No student should experience food insecurity, especially while prioritizing their education and future. These young adults put their trust into your institution, and they need your support. I hope you will consider my proposal to tackle this serious issue within your college.

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